

quickly to provide assistance to the Maliki government before every gain made by the U.S. and allied troops is lost and before ISIL expands its sanctuary from which it can eventually threaten the United States.

Several weeks ago the President spoke at West Point, and in that speech he vaguely described a new counterterrorism strategy that he said “matches this diffuse threat” by “expand[ing] our reach without sending forces that stretch our military too thin, or [that] stir up local resentments.” He said that “we need partners to fight terrorists alongside of us.”

The President must quickly provide us with a strategy and plan that address the threat posed by the insurgency and the terrorist capabilities of ISIL, and he must explain that new strategy.

THE IRS

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, when the IRS targeting of conservative groups came to light after the last Presidential election, just about everyone denounced the agency’s Nixonian tactics. Members of both parties—from the President on down—called it outrageous and inexcusable and just about everyone agreed no stone should be left unturned in figuring out how it happened in the first place.

Well, that was more than a year ago, and despite the President’s assurances that he was as mad as everybody else, his administration has been anything but cooperative in the time that has elapsed since then. Instead of working with Congress to get to the bottom of what happened, the President’s allies actually went in the opposite direction. They tried to slip a regulation by the American people that would have effectively enshrined the IRS’s speech suppression tactics—the kind of tactics at the center of the IRS scandal—as permanent agency practice. It was a brazen move on the administration’s part, and administration officials only backed down after Americans rose up and demanded that the IRS get out of the speech suppression business for good. Even some of our friends on the pro-First Amendment left—a dwindling constituency in recent years—joined us in condemning it. But I doubt we have seen the last of the administration’s antifree speech efforts.

We have seen a revival in recent weeks of a truly radical proposal to change the First Amendment. When it comes to the IRS scandal, it is now quite obvious we have not seen the last of the administration’s stalling either. The latest claim by the IRS is that it somehow lost a full 2 years’ worth of emails from the woman in charge of the IRS department at the center of the scandal. They lost 2 years’ worth of emails. But Congress submitted a request for these emails over a year ago, and they are suddenly telling us now? The committees investigating the

scandal need those emails in order to figure out who knew what and when and to determine whether any coordination was going on between the IRS and anyone outside the agency.

I will be interested to see what the IRS Commissioner has to say about all of this when he testifies next week. But please, let’s get past the “dog ate my homework” excuses buried in a late Friday news dump. The President promised to work “hand in hand” with Congress on this matter so his administration needs to live up to that promise immediately.

COAL REGULATIONS

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, in the Obama administration’s latest defensive on the war on coal, it has proposed new regulations that threaten Kentucky’s 20 existing coal-fired powerplants while potentially putting thousands out of work. If enacted, the massive new regulations would prove the single worst blow to Kentucky’s economy in modern times and a dagger to the heart of the Commonwealth’s middle class.

Despite what they are called, the proposed restrictions on Kentucky’s coal-fired powerplants amount to little more than a massive energy tax, and they will have a devastating effect on Kentucky.

The administration announced it would hold four public hearings on the new proposed regulations, and given the dramatic effects they are sure to have on my home State, you would think they would hold one of those hearings in eastern Kentucky or, at the very least, somewhere in Kentucky. But then, of course, you would be mistaken.

Once again, just like last year when the Obama administration held public hearings before proposing this national energy tax, not one of the sessions is slated for a nonmetropolitan area dependent on coal. The session that is the nearest to eastern Kentucky is a 10-hour roundtrip.

Since coal employs 11,000 Kentuckians and is over 90 percent of Kentucky’s electricity, I wrote a letter to Gina McCarthy, the EPA Administrator, formally requesting that she convene a hearing in coal country. Of course I have yet to get a response. However, it doesn’t appear that Administrator McCarthy is too busy to talk to some people. Imagine my surprise when I found she had time to appear on an HBO late-night comedy show where she admitted that the Obama administration is, in fact, waging a war on coal.

The host asked her this question:

Some people call it a war on coal. I hope it is a war on coal. Is it?

After a moment of indirection, Administrator McCarthy conceded that a war on coal is “exactly what this is.” The EPA Administrator said the war on coal is “exactly what this is.”

Of course, this talk show was recorded in front of a friendly anti-coal

host and audience in a television studio in Los Angeles. It almost sounds like the site of one of her EPA anti-coal hearings.

So why does Administrator McCarthy have the time to appear on HBO but does not have the time to appear on WYMT-TV in Hazard so she can explain her war on coal to the people it is most directly affecting? Why does she have the time to sit down with a TV comedian but not with the editors of the Appalachian News Express in Pikeville so she can look my constituents in the eye and explain how these rules will impact them?

Of course, for those of us who watch this administration closely, this kind of admission is nothing new. A year ago an adviser to the White House acknowledged that “a War on Coal is exactly what’s needed.”

Last year, because the administration refused to hold any of its listening sessions in coal country, I held one of my own. We heard a lot of riveting testimony from those in the industry and their families, and I brought their stories back to the administration where I testified on their behalf since the Administrator would not directly hear from them.

I am committed to making sure Kentucky’s voice is heard on this issue even if the Obama administration doesn’t want to listen. That is why I immediately responded to the administration’s new regulations in my own legislation, the Coal Country Protection Act, to push back against the President’s extreme anti-coal scheme. Supported by the Kentucky Coal Association, my legislation would require that the following simple but important benchmarks be met before the rules take effect.

Here is what it would do: No. 1, the Secretary of Labor would have to certify that the rules would not generate loss of employment.

No. 2, the Director of the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office would have to certify the rules would not result in any loss in American gross domestic product.

No. 3, the Administrator of the Energy Information Administration would have to certify the rules would not increase electricity rates.

And No. 4, the Chair of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission and the president of the North American Electric Reliability Corporation would have to certify that electricity delivery would remain reliable. That is it.

My legislation is plain common sense, and I urge the majority leader to allow a vote on my legislation.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Illinois.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, this morning there was a scene on television I had never seen before. In fact, the commentators said they had never seen it either.